

Ruling On Shaking Hands Between Men And Women

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Question: "It has become very common amongst us in these days, when a man goes away on a journey and then returns, a group of women from his "group" come to him and greet him and kiss him and so on, during the days of 'Eid, such as 'Eid-ul-Fitr and 'Eid-ul-Adhaa. Is this permissible?"

Answer: It is well known from evidences in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, ¹ that a woman must not shake hands with or kiss a male that is not a mahram to her, whether it is an occasion of celebration or when arriving from a journey or for any other reason. This is because the woman is 'awrah (i.e. she must be covered) and a fitnah (i.e. a source of temptation). So she must not touch a man that is not considered a mahram ² to her, regardless if it is her cousin or someone distant from her. And she must not kiss him or he kiss her.

We do not know of there being any difference of opinion amongst the scholars regarding the prohibition and rejection of this matter. This is because it is from the things that cause fitnah (trials and tests) and it is from the means that lead to what Allaah has forbidden from the lewd and shameless acts and the customs that oppose the Divine Legislation. It is not permissible for the Muslims to remain upon these customs and to stay attached to them. Rather they must abandon them and fight against them. And they should give thanks to Allaah for having blessed them with knowledge of His Laws and for enabling him to abandon what angers Him.

Allaah sent the Messengers – at the head of whom was our prophet Muhammad – to call the people to single Allaah out in worship and to obey His commandments, and to abandon what He forbade and to fight against the evil practices (of old).

So it is obligatory to abandon such a practice (of shaking hands). And it is sufficient to give the greetings with speech, without touching or kissing. And there is much sufficiency in what Allaah has legislated and permitted for us over what He forbade and disallowed. Also, the greeting must be done while the woman is wearing the Hijaab, especially with the young females, because

uncovering the face is not allowed. This is due to it being from the greatest part of a woman's beauty that Allaah has forbidden her to expose, where He says:

¹ **Translator's Note:** From the several ahaadeeth clearly prohibiting shaking hands between men and women not related to each other (i.e. not mahaarim) are: The Prophet (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: **"That a man get struck with an iron needle in his head is better for him than that he touches a woman that is not permissible for him (to touch)."** [Reported by At-Tabaraanee, Al-Bayhaqee and others and Imaam Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *Silsilat As-Saheehah* (1/447-448)] And the Prophet (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: **"Indeed, I do not touch the hands of women."** [At-Tabaraanee in *Al-Mu'jam-ul-Kabeer* (24/342) and authenticated in *Saheeh Al-Jaami'* (no. 8054)] And 'Aa'ishah (Radiya 'Llahu 'anha) said about the Prophet: **"I swear by Allaah! The hand of a woman never touched the hand of Allaah's Messenger – rather he would take the oath of allegiance from the women verbally."** [*Saheeh Muslim* (3/1489)]

² **Translator's Note:** A mahram is a man whom a woman is permitted to uncover in front of, such as her husband, brother, father and all those other males mentioned in Surah An-Noor (24: 31).

"And let them not expose their beauty, except to their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers..." [Surah An-Noor: 31]

And Allaah says in Surah Al-Ahzaab:

"And if you ask them concerning a matter, then ask them from behind a veil (Hijaab). That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts."
[Surah Ahzaab: 53]

And He says:

"Say to your wives and your daughters and the believing women to let them draw (from) their jilbaabs, (placing it down) all over themselves. That is better that they be known (as free women), and so that they won't be molested. And Allaah is All-Forgiving, the Bestower of Mercy."
[Surah Al-Ahzaab: 59]

And He says:

"And the *Qawaa'id* (old women past age of child-bearing), who do not expect wedlock, there is no sin on them if they discard (i.e. take off) their (outer) garments, without doing so in a manner so as to show off their adornment immorally (tabbaruj). But if they refrain from doing that, this is better for them. And Allaah is the All-Hearer, All-Knower."
[Surah An-Noor: 60]

The "*Qawaa'id*" here refers to old barren women. Allaah explains that there is no sin on them if they decide to remove their outer garments from off their faces and such, so long as they do not do it in a manner in which they would be exposing their beauty wrongly. But continuing to wear the veil is better for them, due to what it offers from distancing her away from fitnah.

And if they are going to expose their beauty wrongly, then they must not take off their outer garment, but instead continue to veil, even if they are old barren women.

So from all of this, we come to know that the young women are obligated to wear the Hijaab, by way of the veil, in all situations, whether they would be exposing themselves improperly or not. This is because the fitnah that can be caused by them and the danger of their unveiling is greater.

And since Allaah has forbidden the women from unveiling, then forbiddance of touching and kissing (male strangers) takes greater precedence. So it is an obligation to abandon all of this and warn against it, and to advise one another to abandon it. May Allaah direct all of us to what pleases Him and protect us from the things that bring about His Anger. Verily, He is the Most Magnanimous, Most Generous.